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***Associative commitment by social investment:
when local sports clubs reinforce the ability
to think the world***

Summary

In Switzerland, voluntary commitment in sport associations is considerably widespread. Moreover, it proves to be particularly necessary to the two sports we put our focus on in this inquiry, namely baton twirling and women's football, both suffering a lack of legitimacy at the social and sports level. In this paper, which reports an ethnography of six clubs showing no elitist aspiration, we observe that their members struggle to obtain acknowledgement for their work and progress. Assuming that these associative commitments constitute a significant modality of social investment, we demonstrate that they enable minority groups not only to remain in an organised sport activity, but also,

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and mainly, allow them to construct a critical look to their social environment, according to the standpoint theory developed by Dorothy Smith.

Key words: social investment, volunteering, girls' sport, standpoint theory

Introduction

As a future-oriented approach, social investment has a significant role in youth development. We chose to analyze this through voluntary associative commitments, looking at sports “policies” as social policies, guided by the goals of integration, equality, skill development and reducing vulnerabilities (Bonvin 2008; Cytermann, Wanecq 2016). More precisely in this contribution, we want to demonstrate, using theoretical resources and by means of an ethnographic inquiry in Switzerland about six non-elitist³ sports clubs, comprised of girls aged between 4 and 20 years and coming from a modest and migrant origin, that these associative commitments constitute a significant modality of social investment. This claim has two reasons. Firstly, these commitments allow a minority group, whose weak sporting exposure is well-attested, to remain within an organised sporting activity. Secondly, they enable those young girls to build a critical look at their social environment; and this point relates to the “standpoint theory” developed by the Anglo-Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith. In other words, and this is our starting hypothesis, non-elitist sports clubs, which are mostly dependent on volunteering, relate to social investment because they allow “small publics” to fully take part in society, that is to be a part of and to have a place in society, while also developing a critical look at the world, its organisation, its power relations, and creating reflexive, and therefore affirmative, identities.

We will begin by presenting voluntary associative commitment in the field of popular sports in Switzerland. In terms of social policies, this is indeed one of the specificities of this country. To analyse our data, we will build on Dorothy Smith's work on “standpoint”, a methodology which explains how minority actors' social experiences can encourage them to think critically about the world. The results include both the young athletes and the supervising staff.

A context: social investment and sports volunteering in Switzerland

In Switzerland, and as many history and sociology papers have largely shown, voluntary commitment is particularly perceptible in sporting associations, regarding first of all trainers, instructors⁴ and administrative members. In order to be specific, we define volunteering

³ It is relevant to point out that a major feature, regarding the characteristics of those clubs, is lost in translating from French to English. The original French “clubs de proximité” conveys something more than just a non-elitist aspiration. Indeed, it really implies concepts such as closeness and togetherness as well as inclusiveness, integration, “local scale” and modest ambitions.

⁴ We distinguish trainers (or coaches) from instructors in two ways. Firstly, our acceptation specifically links the former to football and the latter to baton twirling. Secondly, and for this reason,

as an activity that is neither compulsory nor paid, but socially useful; “a citizen’s active participation in the life of communities in an organised way” (Halba 2003, p. 11). From a statistical point of view and narrowing it down to volunteering purely in sports, the 2000 European overview depicted by Halba ranked Switzerland in the leading group, along with Scandinavian countries and with around 50 sports volunteers per 1000 citizens. More recent studies reveal that voluntary commitment has slightly decreased since then. Indeed, the Swiss federal statistics office (Schön-Bühlmann 2015) reveals a 5-points diminution drop between 2000 and 2013 — 20% of the total population. However, some permanent features remain: the people that involve themselves the most are invariably 40–54 years old, highly educated, German-speaking and inhabitants living in small municipalities (<1000 people). The sum of hours is also unaltered (14 hours monthly). While there are roughly more male volunteers than female, this difference has slightly shrunk over the last 15 years. Lastly, sports associations’ involvement remains the largest part of organised volunteering amongst men (9% of the total population) and women (4,5%).

This voluntary engagement can be viewed from an integration perspective, but also as “valuing the general interest” and a “vitalisation of the social fabric”, as a study from the Federal Sports Office puts it (Lamprecht, Fischer, Stamm 2011, p. 11). Also, many research studies outline associative sport as an answer to social issues (Coignet 2013; Gasparini, Vieille Marchiset 2008). Indeed, the sports club is an organisation that produces social bonding, reinforces socialisation and hence opens to integration pathways.

But the questions arise: does the role of organised sports clubs wear out in this vocation of socialisation to the standards, and can such institutions offer opportunities for reaching other experiences that are precisely beyond the traditional use of social integration paradigm? Put in other words and referring to the notion of social investment stated by the European Commission, namely “policies designed to strengthen people’s skills and capacities and support them to participate fully in employment and social life”⁵, do non-elitist sports clubs support the strengthening of skills and capacities in order to fully take part in society, that is by benefitting from material and cognitive resources? Then, does this constitute then spaces in which interrogations about questions on how to see the world, that is, interpretations of the reality, production of beliefs and identification of stakes and interests?

A theoretical resource: Dorothy Smith’s standpoint theory

In order to explain how a minority group acquires a critical look at the world from its minority position, which in itself is modest in the social space, we chose the “standpoint theory” as expressed by Dorothy Smith. The “standpoint” is a methodological tool developed in the 1970s second wave of feminist studies that can be briefly described by “a will to describe, understand and explicit the reality of the life” of women, constituting

instructors always refer to women; it is the case in the limits of our inquiry, whereas all trainers but one are men.

⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044&langId=en> [access: 24.08.2016].

a true “awareness” (Descarries-Bélanger, de Sève 1985, pp. 7–8). Taken over and reworked by Smith, who placed it explicitly in a Marxism-inspired tradition (Carroll 2011), the standpoint theory consisted in “an enterprise in trying to discover and trying to understand the objective social, economic, and political relations which shape and determine women’s oppression in this kind of society” (Smith 2005, p. 237). It is characterised by two main ambitions: firstly, to reveal structures at the root of men’s domination over women; secondly, and this is the Marxist inspiration that we willingly adopt, to show that a dominated position presents a substantial epistemic advantage. Indeed, the standpoint theory literally permits the elaboration of a point of view — a standpoint — on society, just like a balcony gives a view over a landscape, if we accept the spatial metaphor, making it possible to mapallowing mapping the world and consequently, to positionplacing oneself with reflexivity in public life.

In other words, the dimension that we precisely want to take sets the standpoint theory as a means to form the hypothesis of a capacity for an interpretative and critical reading of the surroundings in which subjects are inscribed from a social experience; an experience that enable us to understand who we are, to sense what is around us and, moreover, where we belong in this environment. In sum, “theories do not just appear suddenly, fully equipped, from women’s and men’s minds; they grow from people’s concrete experiences, and more precisely from the understanding these people have of their own life”⁶ (Hamilton 2003, p. 175). From a theoretical perspective, we can then claim that, through an ordinary sporting activity that files girls in a universe that shows power relations and strong assignment logics, girls produce affirmative identities by finding their place in public life, which is constituted by the “others”, who in turn produce judgement but also recognition. There is, within the same ordinary sporting activity, a strong, socially organised dissonance between practising a pleasant activity within a nice setting and the “tougher” reality of the activity, when female athletes and players are being confronted with the sports institution or even with social gaze.

The inquiry

This contribution derives from a research lead in Switzerland — in three French-speaking cantons — on leisure activity and associative life in non-elitist sports clubs. It is financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), and is lead in collaboration with the University of applied sciences in social work (EESP) in Lausanne and the International sports studies centre (CIES) of the University of Neuchâtel.

The inquiry in question relates to non-elitist clubs, particularly baton twirling⁷ and women’s football clubs, and is still ongoing at the time that this document is being writtenof

⁶ Original text: “les théories ne surgissent pas toutes armées des cerveaux [...] des femmes et des hommes; elles se développent à partir des expériences concrètes des gens, et plus précisément à partir de la compréhension que ces gens ont de leur vie”.

⁷ In brief, baton twirling consists of a mix of rhythmic gymnastics and stick manipulation with music and choreography.

writing this paper. In total, we have followed six clubs, three for each sport, over more than a year. The subject population is constituted of all the central and peripheral members of those clubs: the girls (athletes and players), active members (trainers, instructors), administrative members as well as parents. The girls who are involved in these clubs are between 4 and 20 years of age and for the most part from the lower class, off from a migrant origin. We can thus say that they constitute a threefold minority group: they are children; they are girls whose practice lies in a universe historically revolving around masculine values; they belong to the popular fringe of society. We can add that both sports in question are subject to social depreciation. Baton twirling is often associated with an outdated and stereotyped picture of femininity, not to mention its feeble public and media visibility. Women's football, despite an increase in numbers, struggles to break free from a the heavy, culturally androcentric authority.

In details, the clubs that we study present various profiles as well as a few similitudessimilarities. For instance, all of them are located in a large town or its outskirts but one: the baton twirling club of C., which is a village. The familiarity specific to villages, the parents' implication and the proximity between members are however shared by the two other baton twirling clubs (club of G., club of N.), located in big cities.

In most of the cases, we can note that the recruitment process of athletes is generally carried by word-of-mouth. Nonetheless, it is also a matter of neighbourhood: children catch sight of the trainings (as it happens in the clubs of N. and G.), which inspires a desire to practise this intriguing sport. There are fathers and mothers involved together, but especially brothers and sisters. That is the case of the club of C. where the instructor teaches her own children. Even more striking, the club of G. is a family affair: daughter, mother and grandmother hold positions in its organisation. What is more, committee members share a sentimental bond with the clubs. As a matter of fact, they are frequently composed of former athletes or ex-majorettes⁸ (Chimot, Schotté 2006).

In terms of headcount, numbers are of the same approximate size in each of the three clubs. There are 22 athletes (14 in the younger group; 8 in the older group) and 8 instructors including the president for the club of G.; 23 athletes (18; 5) including two boys (one with the juniors, the other as an elite senior) and 6 instructors for the club of C.; and lastly, 28 athletes (21; 7) and 4 instructors for the club of N. Essentially, athletes join these clubs at the minimum age of 4 and the oldest are about 20 years old.

Regarding football, we follow the clubs of R., B. and X. The club of R. counts 19 teams including 2 women's line-ups (1 junior and 1 senior), totalling around 40 female players. Our investigation specifically aims at the girls' team (evolving in category junior C — 14 to 16 years old), which has been coached by A. (also the player of the women's team) and now P. (her former assistant, which took the team over since A. left). The club's glorious past (as for its men's flagship team) contrasts with the current poor performances of the

⁸ Reconversion of former sportsmen and sportswomen into club management, as well as the passion that this activity requires can be identified in almost every sports and are not a Swiss particularity.

male teams. However, it was recently handed over to a new manager whose plan is to get the elite team back on track as soon as possible.

The club of B. was created less than 10 years ago, yet but it already counts 16 teams, including 4 female teams (3 junior and 1 senior). As neighbourhood club, the club of B. attracted many young boys and girls. We take particular interest in the three girls' teams, which bring over 60 players (aged 7 to 16) together and are trained by three different (male) coaches (A., M. and L.). People from the club's administration, as well as trainers, are almost exclusively (former) residents of the neighbourhood.

The organisation of the club of X. is considerably more structured than those of the two previous clubs. Indeed, it has spent a long time at the highest level of the national championship and currently counts 21 teams, including one that now stands in the leading group of the second professional division, as well as many junior elite teams. The club has also one women's team and one girls' team, which is coached by J. This line-up consists of 20 girls between 15 and 18 years old and regularly has to refuse newcomers, which is proof of a demand that exceeds supply in terms of women's football in that region.

Methodological overview

In a first phase, data collection was operated by means of observation. In each of the six clubs, we have spent between 10 and 20 hours on of observation, mainly during trainings and competitions, but also in non-sporting events such as the end-of-season meals. The central aim of these investigations, expressed by the observation table, consisted in noticing, first and foremost, the primarily interactions — between the children or between the children and adults — as well as pedagogic methods and construction of one's own world.

Second phase revolved around group interviews undertaken performed with the young athletes. These interviews were carried out by the researchers with two or three girls at a time, mostly during trainings. As fundamental tool of our data collection, interviews with girls were designed as semi-directive and wholly inclusive, aiming to compute, for instance, motivations for the activity, how it is experienced, or the interactions that it produces. The final goal of this second phase entailed to meet each one of the girls evolving in all of the teams we followed. Interviews sessions were always planned beforehand with trainers and instructors, with whom the ethical issue, specific to the inquiry, was also discussed. Indeed, some of the supervising staff wished that we would get preliminary parental agreement, and some did not judge it as deem it necessary.

In a third phase that is to come, we will undertake personal interviews with the adults, that is, central and peripheral members as well as parents. Those interviews will cover issues such as the training approach, positioning towards sports institution, or personal involvement and career-path.

At the present stage of the research, data collection stretched to a whole sporting season (September to June). It is understood that we would follow the clubs during one more season in order to complete the fieldwork.

Structural fragility and confrontation experiences: an opportunity of interpreting the world

The clubs we follow, the way they work and their history, are all testaments to the fragility that persists in the structures whose organisation ensue from amateurism. Indeed, their non-elitist ambition implies characteristics of a local scale and inclusiveness. As for the executive and managing staff, almost all of the club members are volunteers and happen to be hardly ever defrayed compensated for their commitment. Having to rely on their goodwill leads these amateur clubs to a fragility of their own. Moreover, in some cases, certain norms and expectations instituted by sports federations threaten these structures, as we were able to observe.

One can give a second example of fragility, that being the place of women's sports in the sporting institution, which is known to be historically and culturally androcentric and thus regularly discriminating⁹. A fragility that goes hand in hand with the specific vulnerability of disciplines that lack social and sports acknowledgement. Baton twirling is seen as cheesy and close to out-dated femininity standards while women's football is stuck in this male-dominated sport, which, to a certain extent, settles down the benchmark of this game.

The examples that we want to bring out illustrate two aspects. Firstly, these clubs and their members encounter certain "ordeals". The second aspect lies in the fact that these ordeals represent a threat for the clubs. Especially when they concern, as it is notably the case for baton twirling baton, a logic of "sportivisation", meaning the imposition of performance and excellence standards upon institutions that are precisely wary of such aspiration. In detail, this goals arrangement has been set by the Swiss twirling federation, which had decided to establish new requirement levels for athletes willing to take part in national and international competitions in order to produce an elite. The requirements are called "routines" and "degrees". Degrees allow athletes to prepare themselves for competitions. Routines are different in that athletes do not compete one against the other, but instead, obtain a grade certification that enable them to enter the Swiss championships. The strengthening of the expectation results in soon-to-be empty competing categories and a serious decline of the in the number of athletes that would be able to compete at the highest level. One can observe that the clubs reacted against this increasing selection. In brief, in our first individual interviews, the clubs' managing staff spoke about "a downward slide", an "elimination of the masses", "destructing the

⁹ As summarised by Koivula (2001, p. 361): "Sport has traditionally been regarded as primarily a male territory [...]. It has been suggested that sport is a representation of the sociocultural system in which it occurs and that sports reflect, as well as reproduce, the attitudes, beliefs, rituals, and values of the societies in which they are developed. It is therefore argued that sport has been, and continues to be, a site for the construction, reconstruction, strengthening, and naturalization of perceived gender differences, and, further, that it serves to reaffirm the gender dichotomization and the gender order in which the gender categories are differently valued [...]."

bottom of the pyramid to favour the top”, “a punishment”, “closing the doors”, “being set aside”, and so on.

As a concrete illustration of this expanding sporting logic, we attended a young girl’s routine exam during a round of the championship — precisely, a girl whose mother is also the club’s president. Extremely tense on that day, the aforementioned mother explained that she hoped her daughter would get a gold medal¹⁰ straight away, so as not to “scrape her off the ground”. When competing on stage, the girl hesitates for a moment and drops her baton. The mother hides her eyes. As the result is announced, the young athlete gets a bronze medal. The mother bursts into tears, just as the girl does. Her brother and sister stand aside without a word as they feel for her while the other athletes gather around and hug the girl. The mother tries to ease her saying that she did a good start. As a joke, she tells her daughter that she will have to quit twirling, but the girl shouts “No!” full of will to continue. We can see in this picture all the severe, demanding and dreaded experience of those new sportivisation goals, as well as the intensity with which they are pursued/undergone. In another club, the athletes’ supervisor and president’s mother reinforces this apprehension and those trials’ intransigence by giving the example of one of her athletes who only got the required routine on her tenth attempt.

As far as the young athletes are concerned, those new requirements arouse reactions too. As the following interviews extracts depict it clearly, the group prevail over the individual, even in competition. The competition is consequently readapted, reinterpreted in order not to discriminate against any athlete, as a definite imperative that seems structure the clubs’ morals and practical life.

“I... It’s OK. Warm-ups are OK. But what I don’t like, when we have to... when I... because I’m a bit older than them, so I do other things. I’ve got to learn for the exam. It’s an exam we have to pass to go to the group of the older ones. And learning is lame, I think, because we have to do some moves and I don’t remember all of them”.

(L., 10 years old, Club of N.)

“No, sometimes, for example when I learn new exercises and my sister doesn’t, then I try to teach her outside of twirling. So she knows them, and so, we are about at the same level”.

(L., 10 years old, Club of C.)

— “But what was then interesting, when I came, everything changed. For example, when I wasn’t there, they did twirling in another way. They did the warm up in a circle [...] Then, when I came, all the warm-up changed. Then we changed place and that’s it. For me, it was interesting.

— [Interviewer] I didn’t understand. What changed?

— Well, it changed... because I came and I was the new one. They saw that for me, what they do there, it wasn’t so comfortable. I’m not so...

— OK, so they changed because...

— Yes, for me”.

(A. 7 years old, Club of G.)

¹⁰ There are routine levels 1, 2 and 3, and again gold, silver and bronze for each one of them. It is possible to regress, that is, to score bronze after silver.

This situation illustrates well the gap between two sides of this sport. On one hand, it would be to practise twirling in a warm and pleasant atmosphere while learning and improving techniques and especially, integrating athletes of all levels. And on the other hand, to practise this sport following an elitist aspiration, heteronormative in a way, in order to achieve a higher level of performance. This gap constitutes an experience, a true confrontation; a submission to a higher will, perceived as an injustice. But this confrontation is not only sealed by despair and renouncement, since the observations we did lead us to think that there is an experience of the world and society at play; a learning process “of” and “upon” the world. In other words, the athletes and other members, whatever positions they hold, perceive the stakes of this situation and develop a critical and reflexive thinking about it; opening on an embodied knowledge of society, its structuring organisation and power relations.

As for baton twirling, sportivisation also concerns also other dimensions of the associative life, namely the club’s financial resources. Indeed, clubs need a certain number of certified and active instructors in order to get subsidies, thus urging their members to follow the mandatory training course. The course in question is part of the *Jeunesse+Sport* (J+S, i.e. youth and sport) *programme*, which allows for subsidies from the Confederation. The J+S programme is run by the Federal sports office and offers formations and services in many sports disciplines. The offer covers each level, as well as a large choice of continuing education.

The clubs concerned by our inquiry, whether in football or in baton twirling, largely count on those subventions to pay, whenever possible, their coaches and instructors. Besides, the clubs find their sponsors in local banks, restaurants or shops to build their annual budget. That is in addition to the members’ subscriptions, entry fees, funds raised at events (from lotto, pastry selling, demonstrations), with public and private subsidies, as well as donations.

Certain clubs, especially in football, have been granted financial support directly by the city in which they are located. As a matter of fact, one of the football clubs we follow is situated in a neighbourhood that suffers from a historically poor reputation. The reason is mainly a very young population, whose delinquency rate is rather high, and half of which is from of a migrant origin. In 2007, the club of B. is created based on one resident’s will to keep the youth busy with sports. Taking the effort and the success — particularly among young girls — into consideration, the municipality supported the project by financing new infrastructures and a new synthetic training field.

In keeping with the subject of football, there are various labels that clubs can aim for. Most of them are offered, therefore financially assured, by the Swiss football association (ASF). One of these labels specifically concerns the specifically female elite clubs (first division). Aptly named “women’s club label”, it is in fact a bilateral agreement. Indeed, more than just an opportunity for the clubs to receive financial help, it has become mandatory and it defines a standard that clubs are expected to observe. In the form of a financial bonus-penalty system, this standard sets requirements leading to a fine when not fulfilled, just as it allows for subsidies when extra criteria

are met¹¹. For example, a club can receive CHF 500 — per newspaper article or report; or a CHF 1000 — bonus when the assistance exceeds 300 people; but it will have to pay CHF 500 — if a medical staff, a speaker and catering are not provided.

The labels are not restricted to women's teams. On the contrary, the main part of the funding concerns youth elite training. Indeed, the ASF together with the SFL (Swiss football league — parallel organisation managing both professional male divisions) help financing youth training clubs¹². The principle of those labels is similar to the aforementioned example, that is, setting mandatory requirements, which in turn allow for subsidies when the extra standards are fulfilled. However, youth elite training in Switzerland almost exclusively concerns almost exclusively boys. Only a few girls are distributed among the elite teams. There is nonetheless a private funding specifically dedicated to girls' elite training. The Crédit Suisse football academy (financed by this particular bank) allows the few selected girls to combine school and football training with a professional staff.

Unfortunately, this range of financing opportunities that Swiss football institutions offer does not concern, even remotely, the teams we follow, since none of them evolve in this elite. A good illustration of this discrepancy is one of "our" clubs, namely the club of X., which brings to light an obvious paradox. It is indeed an elite men's club, having its flagship team in the second professional division, but also a large number of elite boys' teams. Most of them benefit from a (semi-)professional staff, whereas, in the shadows, both women's and girls' teams have to handle things and gather most of the money themselves. For instance, it can be noted that the current coach of the girls' team had to take care of absolutely everything (all funding aspects included) at the time the team was created, since the club claimed it did not have time nor money to allocate.

For women's football, sportivisation translates into a constant aspiration of setting the same standards as the ones ruling the men's game. Again, most of the girls we interviewed vividly feel this discrepancy:

"Er, I'd say that for women's football, yeah it's true that they don't value it enough, that precisely they give too much importance to boys, even the ones that don't play well, really [laughs] But yeah, it's a shame, because- well, it's also, let's say, because the time in which we live is like that, because if it were our sport there would be less boys that played it. I mean, it's like dancing really, it's more feminine and less masculine. Except that now, it's a sport that begins to become feminine too ... Well, feminine, I mean that there are girls starting to play. But yeah, I think they don't value it enough, there's not enough teams. Meaning that we're doing a ... basic championship, with 7 teams sometimes. Well, for the older ones it's OK, but for us I mean, having only 7 teams, always meeting the same faces, and basically playing always the same teams. It can be three times the same teams. It's a bit ... rubbish".

(A., 15 years old, Club of X.)

¹¹ "Label de club de football féminin. Saison 2015/2016", http://www.football.ch/fr/Portaldata/1/Resources/bilder/Annonce_label_de_club_FF_150226.pdf [access date: 24.08.2016].

¹² "Label de formation. Saison 2015/2016", http://www.sfl.ch/uploads/media/Label_de_formation_2015-16.pdf [access date: 24.08.2016].

Also, we note how this asymmetry, though it is clearly perceived, does not lead to feelings of resentment or weariness, which could end in withdrawal from the activity. Again, all seems to happen as if the regular practice of an activity, which is confronted to an unfair and unequal world, produced a judgement capacity allowing those young girls to understand, assess and find their way into the world; moreover, to put judgements and assignments into perspective when they denigrate an identity, whether it be social, cultural, gender or sports-related. Thus, tough competition against boys is unavoidable up to a certain age category (15–17 years old) because of the championship's organisation and the rarity of all-female teams, this confrontation between sexes is relatively well taken by most of the girls; even though female grouping is always preferred:

- [Interviewer] “OK. And for you, to play against boys, how is it going?”
- Quite well, and I get the impression that it makes us a bit stronger — I mean, it ... it makes us get better, because boys play better, still”.

(J., 15 years old, Club of R.)

“Yeah, I didn't feel comfortable playing in a boys' team. They always play amongst themselves, whereas when we're just girls, well it's natural, like, it just feels right”.

(R., 13 years old, Club of B.)

“Back then, when we used to play against boys because there wasn't any girls' team, well it threw me off because boys, when they lose against girls, they're frustrated, and it lead to a lot of conflicts and fighting and all. I don't like that. I'd rather play against girls”.

(B., 15 years old, Club of B.)

To sum up, for women's football, many inequalities regarding redistribution of (material and financial) resources remain. Sociologically speaking, the several female teams in the clubs can be considered as parallel organisations, as Goffman (Goffman 2002) puts it. As we suggested, not only do these glitches certainly arouse a feeling of injustice but also contribute to shape an experience that reveals male-female social relations, since girls seem to have “less value” than boys.

It can be noted from the foregoing remarks how the constraining force of the “already-there” can be described as a set of constraints and rationings, stemming from the unconceived or from socially fixed paths of dependence, as well as explicit malevolence; making the life of these teams and clubs more precarious and vulnerable, while conducting to serious denials of recognition that constitute the ordeals they have to overcome. One must also acknowledge, on the contrary, the strength of the love and passion for a sport, but even more so the affective cement between girls, and between the girls and the adults. On this point, the inquiry has shown that the coaches, instructors and other supervising members are the true embodiment of this passion. They mention that, sometimes, they even have to replace — involuntarily — the girls' parents. Some of them take a dim view of the role of “day-care” that parents seem to give them, quite pleased that their child is taken care of, while not showing any interest in their competitions or training. Of

course, this civic engagement merely skims Esping-Andersen's (Esping-Andersen 2008) perception of social investment, but it actually enables the girls to build their own critical look at the world by taking part into community activity.

Conclusion

The inquiry we depicted in the course of this contribution has shown, essentially and against many scepticisms, that the appreciated practice of an ordinary activity, in the frame of "small societies" characterised by values such as kindness, familiarity, closeness and attention to focus on others, opens to confrontation experiences that definitely carry a definitely political dimension, since they lead to a capacity of understanding the world and a longing for a certain equality. As a matter of fact, through these denigrating ordeals, young girls that are not strictly speaking political subjects are being confronted with the big society, and here specifically with the sporting institution. In the same way, these girls experience the look that society takes on activities, whose social and sporting legitimacy is poorly established because of their popular or masculine characteristics. These confrontations induce a reflexive work that we can describe as political, since it allows to connect sectorial conflict situations with the social engineering, and therefore to bring about generalisation: how does it feel to play football when you are a girl? Or, to expose yourself when your body does not correspond to esthetical standards; what is more, within a sport that is nearly unknown?

Two points ensue from our primary inquiry data. Let us first mention the theoretical premise we think we gave more consistency to, that is, that the associative life does not limit itself to community, that is, to the club and its activities. But rather, it is rather that the associative life, which can be considered as a little "society", is a stepping-stone to the big one, an opening to the social world, to its "institutions" and to its ruling principles; to induce an "experience of society". The association is therefore not restricted to private space but opens itself to the outside, to the social, to the society. Then, unfolding Dorothy Smith's theory, there is a set of ordinary life situations, common and anecdotic, that can constitute "standpoints" and favour experiences enabling to build a critical point of view on the world. In those terms, as Smith noted, critical and political analysis of society is therefore no prerogative of the scholars, those who are more capable of deciphering the social machine. This is the precise reason we were interested in the conditions that make girls build their own critical standpoint and take part, consequently, to society; occurrence of social investment because this participation is, in a way, direct and immediately effective since it is independent from the socialisation and integration goals of organised leisure associations.

We would like to conclude this short presentation by putting focus on two specific points. Firstly, organised leisure associations, and especially sports clubs, have often been analysed by sociology as spaces of integration and socialisation to a social normativity that allows societal life. However, they can also be viewed as spaces for learning about the world and the way how it works, as spaces of confrontation with institutions, with

actors and with forces that, by generalisation of local situations, enable to understand attribution and injustice.

Secondly, coming back to our stream, we want to say that, without a doubt, one can make an obvious connection between organised leisure activity and social investment. Except that this link has to be double. In other words, if a sports club is a chance to take part in the world through sporting activity, as it strengthens skills and capacities to comprehend the world in which young girls live, then participation to such organised activity stems from an investment or a commitment, which enable to take part in, and to find one's place in, the world.

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Streszczenie

W Szwajcarii dobrowolne zaangażowanie w stowarzyszeniach sportowych jest znacznie rozpowszechnione. Okazuje się ono szczególnie popularne w dwóch dyscyplinach sportowych, na których skupiono się w tym badaniu, tj. gimnastyce artystycznej i piłce nożnej kobiet. Co istotne, dyscypliny te mają małą legitymację na poziomie społecznym i sportowym. W artykule, który opisuje etnografię sześciu klubów o charakterze egalitarnym, zauważono, że ich członkowie walczą o społeczne uznanie dla swojej działalności. Zakładając, że te zobowiązania stowarzyszeniowe stanowią znaczącą modalność inwestycji społecznych, wykazano, że umożliwiają one grupom mniejszościowym nie tylko na uczestnictwo w zorganizowanej działalności sportowej, ale także, i przede wszystkim, pozwalają im budować krytyczne spojrzenie na ich otoczenie społeczne, zgodnie z teorią punktu widzenia Dorothy Smith.

Słowa kluczowe: inwestycje społeczne, wolontariat, sport dziewczęcy